

Post-compulsory and Lifelong Learning SIG

Main activities and events of the SIG in the past year.

Like other SIGs and research networks, our work over the past year was disrupted by the COVID-19 outbreak. In particular, a highly promising event on vocational knowledge and expertise, planned to take place at KCL with presenters from Kings and international speakers, was cancelled by BERA close to its public launch, as of course was the BERA Conference. When BERA opened up their webinar series, the SIG organised an event around the submissions to conference. The papers reported both transformative work undertaken by educators and the constraints of policy technologies, labour markets and production regimes. Details of the event and presenters are available at <https://www.bera.ac.uk/event/aspiration-and-constraint-in-the-post-covid-post-compulsory-crisis>, including full video of the event. A follow-up blog was suggested by BERA and, following some false starts, this is proceeding under the leadership of Christina Donovan (see below).

What are the key issues currently affecting your Special Interest Area?

Although our field has been designated as central to the post-COVID, post-Brexit recovery, the nature of policy interventions remains an area of tension and uncertainty. Proposals to strengthen work-based routes and higher education progression are linked to 'levelling up' and place agendas but this may simply strengthen the role of employers whilst negatively affecting educational practice. The Augar review, which seemed to have been quietly shelved, may be revived in some form, leading to further uncertainties over the balance of FE/HE provision and progression between routes, including the future of foundation years.

Are there any particular developments for your SIG on the horizon, e.g. newsletters, publications, blogs, events, projects?

Our most urgent priority is to develop the Blog we agreed to follow on from our recent webinar, <https://www.bera.ac.uk/event/aspiration-and-constraint-in-the-post-covid-post-compulsory-crisis>. Christina Donovan, who presented at the webinar will co-ordinate this work. Presenters at the webinar are invited to submit a blog of up to 750 words (incl. refs) to christina.donovan@mmu.ac.uk before the end of March. SIG members unable to make the event are also welcome to add blogposts within this broad theme: please contact Christina to discuss your potential contribution. Check out the BERA blog for further guidance on BERA blogposts. We hope to revive our cancelled event on vocational knowledge and expertise, either in an online or face-to-face format later in the year. A planned event bringing together journal editors in our field to talk about their role in reflecting and shaping the field can be revived, possibly within the webinar format.

What other organizations does your SIG collaborate with?

Foundation Year Network

How has your SIG worked to encourage diversity amongst your membership? How do you plan to encourage diversity in the future?

The SIG, like our field, is networked across UK nations and internationally. This has been reflected in our recent webinar (including a contribution from Ireland), our planned vocational knowledge event (originally planned to include a leading European expert in this field) and other forthcoming activities. SIG members are involved in the European research network, EERA; in its largest network, VETNET; and in regular international events, most recently the VETNET-BIBB research meeting at European Skills Week.

A possible collaboration in the future could be with the NERUPI network, a community of practice for those seeking to reduce inequalities in higher education access, participation and progression

